

this time of mourning with the people of Ohio. Jim was a dedicated, honorable public servant. His distinguished career included representing Ohio and its people longer than any other Governor in the State's history. Our thoughts and prayers are with his daughters, Suzanne and Sharon, and his entire family.

Remarks at the Swearing-In Ceremony for Joe M. Allbaugh as Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency

March 5, 2001

Thank you all very much. It's an honor to be here to swear in my friend. I first want to say it's a treat to see Mr. and Mrs. Allbaugh from the great State of Oklahoma, and his brother, most importantly, Diane and Taylor. Thank you all for being here. Of course, you wouldn't have missed it. [*Laughter*]

When I was a Governor, Joe and I used to travel a lot together, and a lot of times people would come up and say, "Is he your bodyguard?" [*Laughter*] He wasn't, but I always felt a little safer when he was around. And that's the kind of man he is, and that's the kind of man I wanted to run FEMA.

When the worst happens anywhere in America, I can assure you folks will be confident when Joe Allbaugh arrives on the scene. He's not just a commanding presence, or his stylish hair cut—[*laughter*—it's his confidence, his character, and his calm when trouble comes. This isn't mere speculation.

Last Wednesday at 10:54 in the morning, an earthquake rocked the State of Washington, injuring hundreds of people and causing billion dollars of property damage. By 11:30 that night, Joe Allbaugh was on the scene ready to assist people in need. That's the kind of man he is.

I couldn't have made it to Washington without him. And I can't tell you how honored I am that he has come to Washington to serve his country.

We never know where FEMA will be needed next, but we do know what makes this Agency so effective: more than 2,000 dedicated employees all across America;

4,000 standby employees, ready if needed; an ethic of professionalism and a willingness to work with State and local officials to help people in need.

As Governor I worked with FEMA officials. Joe and I have great respect for the outgoing Director, James Lee Witt, and for the acting Director, John Magaw. A lot of change is needed in Washington, but in this Agency the standards are already high. Every year, many thousands of Americans live through floods and hurricanes and fires. They know from personal experience that FEMA is an example of the Federal Government at its best. And I'll tell you from personal experience that FEMA has a new Director that speaks to America at its best.

When he acts, he'll have my full confidence. When he speaks, it will inspire confidence in others. This Agency is in strong and steady hands. Joe will be at the White House many times in the next few years. In the nature of his job, they won't always be the happiest of times. But Joe will help Americans deal with the worst in the best, most compassionate way possible.

Thank you for accepting this responsibility.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the Columbia Room at the Holiday Inn Capitol At The Smithsonian. In his remarks, he referred to Director Allbaugh's parents, Marvin and Peggy, his brother, Jay, wife, Diane, and daughter, Taylor. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Director Allbaugh.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

March 5, 2001

Santana High School Shootings

The President. Before I talk about the business at hand here, I want to say how saddened we all are to know that two students lost their lives in southern California, others have been injured, in a disgraceful act of cowardice.

When America teaches their children right from wrong and teaches values to respect life and the values that respect life in our country, our country will be better off.

Our hearts go out and our prayers go out to the parents and the teachers and the children whose lives have been completely turned upside down right now.

Q. What can the President do to stop, if anything, to stop children from shooting children?

The President. All of us, all adults in society can teach children right from wrong, can explain there is a—that life is precious. All of us must be mindful of the fact that some people may decide to act out their aggressions or their pain and hurt on somebody else, and be diligent.

We don't know enough of the facts right now, Ron [Ron Fournier, Associated Press], as to what took place. But I do know that first things are first, and that is, our prayers go with the families who lost a child today.

Legislative Agenda

On another matter, I'm honored that Members of the House and the Senate came up to discuss a couple of issues—the budget, Medicare, Medicare funding, Medicare restructuring, and tax relief. We've had a good discussion.

I didn't mention many names of Members during my speech to the Congress nearly a week ago, but most of the names I mentioned are here. And the reason why I talked about Breaux, Frist, and Thomas—and I would have worked in you, Mr. Chairman, but—was because there had been a lot of work done on discussing Medicare modernization in the past. And I believe the framework for a bipartisan consensus about how to make sure the Medicare system fulfills its promise is at hand, and we've got a lot of work to do.

But I assured these Members—two chairmen, as well as the Members I just named—that this administration is here to work with them to do what's right for our seniors.

I also appreciate the progress being made on the tax relief package. It will give me a chance to thank the chairman for moving the bill to the floor of the House. The sooner we can get that done, the more likely it is that we'll provide relief for people and provide a second wind for our economy, and then we'll be able to deal with issues such as Medicare.

Tax Cut Legislation

Q. Mr. President, is your tax bill in trouble? Is that why you're traveling so much this week? Some Democrats think that might be the case.

The President. Oh, I'm—first of all, I like to get out of Washington, Bill [Bill Plante, CBS News]. [Laughter] Secondly, I'm pleased with the progress that we're making. We're going to get a good bill out of both the House and the Senate. I look forward to signing it, and the sooner, the better. But we're making very good progress.

Secondly, I think it's important for the President to get out amongst the people. I'm not only going to be going to North Dakota and South Dakota and Illinois this week; I'm coming down to Louisiana. And I've got a lot of friends in Louisiana, and I'm looking forward to seeing them and talking to them and explaining what's going on in Washington. The American people want to hear from the President, and this will give me a chance to talk about the progress that we're all making together. And we're making good progress.

Q. Mr. President?

The President. Yes, Stretch [David Gregory, NBC News]?

President's Upcoming Visits to North Dakota and Louisiana

Q. Kent Conrad is one of the opponents of the tax cut plan. You're going to his State; you're also going to Louisiana, where Mary Landrieu—everyone knows is going to be under pressure to support the bill. Is it a coincidence that you're going to be going there, or is this trip part of the intention to send them a message?

The President. I think there's some methodology in my travels. Not only—you mentioned two fine Senators, and I'm confident we'll be able to work with them as time goes on. Those also happen to be States where the majority of the folks there saw it my way when I was running for President.

I'll be going to States where we've got a good chance of convincing Members in States where maybe there's some obstinance. But nevertheless, I need to get out, and with the people, and talk about the plans and why this plan is fair and why it makes sense and

why it's important for the economic vitality of the country. We're making good progress. We'll get a good bill, and I look forward to signing it.

Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, are you going to apologize to the Russians for digging under their Embassy?

The President. You need to talk to the appropriate folks involved with that.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:45 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Honoring the NCAA Football and Women's Softball Champion Oklahoma Sooners

March 5, 2001

The President. Sit down. [Laughter] It's an honor to be here. This is the first championship teams that I've had a chance to honor since I've been the President. And it's a big deal for a boy from Texas to welcome the folks from Oklahoma here. [Laughter] I was going to say, "my fellow Texans."

I am so proud of you all. Thank you for coming. Senator, thank you for being here. Congressman, I appreciate you being here. President Boren, you had quite a year—you had quite a year.

First, let me say to the unsinkable bunch of upstarts, the ladies softball team: Congratulations. Coach Patricia Gasso has done a fabulous job, and I'm honored that you all have come. I am fully aware of the dominance of California teams in ladies softball, and you proved that those of us who live in the middle part of the country can win, as well.

And to the football team. Congratulations, coach, I know you're proud of these people. We share a lot in common. We both started our respective campaigns as underdogs. [Laughter] We both won our championships in the State of Florida. [Laughter] There's a big difference though: It took you all 60 minutes. [Laughter] It took me 36 days. [Laughter]

But it's my honor to welcome you all here. I like to remind those who are champions on the field that it's important to be a champion off the field, too; that there's a lot of young men and women who look at you all as champs. And that adds an added burden, an added sense of responsibility; that if part of our role as role models is to set the—is to explain the difference between right and wrong to people looking at us, then we've got to live that way.

Being the champ, the national champ, is an awesome responsibility. It means not only do you get to carry a trophy, it means you have the burden of setting the example, of saying to young kids, somebody cares about you enough so that we'll help you make the right choices in life, so they get to be a champion, not only on the football fields or on the softball diamonds but in life—in life. And so, I am so honored you're here. I really appreciate you coming.

I'm proud of your victory. It's a big deal to be the national champs. But it's also going to be a big deal to set the right example for some young lady or some young man who wonders whether or not life's worth it all, as you've proven it is. You've proven that if you set a goal and work hard, you can achieve it. And so congratulations to the great University of Oklahoma teams. I'm proud to welcome you. I'm proud you're here in the people's house. It is an honor to be your President—more than you can possibly imagine. And it's an honor to welcome you here.

God bless.

[At this point, University of Oklahoma President David L. Boren, head softball coach Patty Gasso, Director of Athletics Joe Castiglione, and head football coach Bob Stoops each made brief remarks and presented the President with gifts.]

The President. Well, thank you all for coming. I look forward to shaking everybody's hand. And I guess it's time to get a few pictures.

But again, I want to welcome you all here. This is a majestic place, as you can see. It is a magnificent home, and it's the people's house. That's what we like to call it. We're just temporary residents. But it's an honor to have you all here. I hope you get a good